

A challenge for ECHO in ex-Yugoslavia : ESTABLISHING A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE HUMANITARIAN EFFORT AND RECONSTRUCTION



Although humanitarian aid will remain absolutely vital for another year or two, the projects must still be reoriented to prepare the way for reconstruction.

Although the cease-fire and the Dayton accord concluded at the end of last year brought great hope for the Yugoslav population, the humanitarian situation has hardly changed at all since then. The most obvious development concerns logistics: access to people in need is much easier, and the good security conditions now allow convoys to move around. Yet needs are still great, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina where humanitarian aid still represents the difference between life and death for very many people.

The signing of the Dayton accord certainly does not mean the end of ECHO's commitment to the humanitarian field in the former Yugoslavia. On the contrary, the continuation of "survival" programmes will undoubtedly remain vital for another year or two. Moreover, ECHO will have to meet a major challenge: assuring the transition between humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction of the various republics devastated by four years of war. At the same time, ECHO will support the refugee repatriation and resettlement programmes, which will be coordinated by the UNHCR.

How can the transition be assured ?

It is perfectly clear that humanitarian aid cannot be ended until people are again able to provide for their basic needs by themselves. That is certainly not the case today. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, where much of the infrastructure has been destroyed, there are currently 2.8 million people who depend on humanitarian aid as their only means of survival (354,000 in Serbia-Montenegro and 350,000 in Croatia). The four years of war have effectively

destroyed all vital parts of the republic's infrastructure, such as the distribution networks for water, energy and the health care services. Obviously, a long transition phase will be needed to reduce the dependence on external aid.

«Our current efforts concentrate on the reorientation of the projects we are funding, so we can cover what is commonly called "the grey area" that exists between humanitarian aid and reconstruction," says Valeriano Diaz of ECHO. "That is why aid projects must now acquire an extra dimension, that is to say they must stimulate the local economy. In real terms, that means we will encourage our partners on the ground to employ more local people, to provide more information and to buy locally whenever possible. At the same time, we will encourage them to do small infrastructure repairs, such as in the medical field.»

Reorientation of projects

ECHO has been supporting emergency rehabilitation programmes in the medical area in Bosnia for some time now, because they are vital for the implementation of the humanitarian programmes. For instance, MSF-Belgique has been involved in repairing hospital infrastructures, as in Maglaj, Maoca and Gorazde. And for the first time this winter, four NGOs (CESVI, MOLISV, Oxfam and Feed the Children) - participating in a programme coordinated by ECHO - have been able to start buying warm clothes locally for displaced persons from the enclaves and for people expelled from Banja Luka. ECHO has funded another type of project to relaunch the local economy: with the aid of Pharmaciens sans Frontières, it has put Sarajevo's medicines inspection laboratory back on its feet. This was essential for restarting the local production of pharmaceutical products. The programmes currently funded by ECHO in the different republics generally focus on food and medical aid, energy supply, winter clothes, psycho-social assistance and the construction of shelters for the most recent waves of refugees and displaced persons. In order to reorient the projects and make the transition under the best possible conditions, ECHO maintains close relations with the European Commission's DGIa, which is responsible for reconstruction in Yugoslavia.

Initiating the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons

It is essential to recreate the fabric of the local economy and basic infrastructure, in order to stimulate the return of the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the neighbouring repu-

blics and in the Member States of the European Union. The number one objective of the UNHCR, which remains the main coordinator of humanitarian aid and the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons, is to resettle 870,000 people in Bosnia by the end of the year. Yet many problems have still to be overcome, including the reconstruction of destroyed houses, procedures to follow regarding property rights for occupied houses, survival means for resettled people, etc. If economic activities are to be restarted, particular attention will have to be paid to the return of skilled labour.

ECHO extends its activity to the resettlement of refugees

In close association with the Member States and other players in the European Commission (especially DGI), ECHO will provide its humanitarian support to the repatriation plan proposed by the UNHCR. To ensure more effective coordination of the humanitarian and resettlement operations, now that security conditions allow it, ECHO will open several offices

in the field over the following weeks. They will be based in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar, Banja Luka and probably in Bihac.

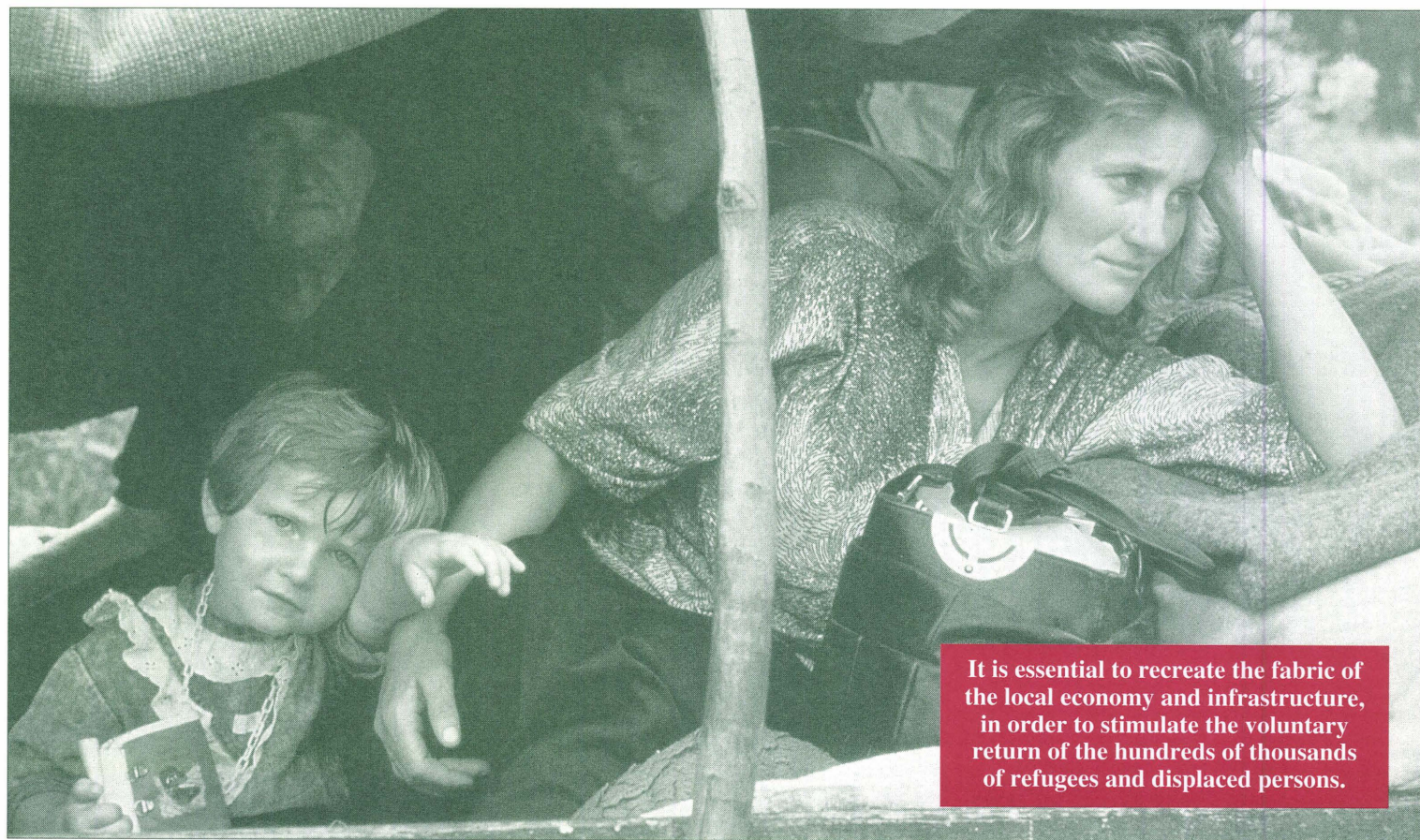
Bosnia: undermined reconstruction

Two to four million mines spread over the length and breadth of the Bosnian territory represent a serious handicap for the country's reconstruction, especially for the revival of agriculture, energy networks and vital resources. One example is the near impossibility of restoring electricity to Bihac, because the surrounding area is littered with mines. The problem is so acute that it will take years to resolve. Most of the mines were not recorded, making the mine clearance operations extremely difficult and hazardous. The Commission has just earmarked 600,000 ECU for a mine clearance programme that will be implemented at first by IFOR and then later by local engineers. Mine clearance plays a crucial role in making a start on the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Hence the Commission's commitment to this unusual step.

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S UNPRECEDENTED EFFORT GOES ON

The populations of ex-Yugoslavia have benefited from the European Union's humanitarian aid since the start of the conflict. To date, the EU has allocated more than 1.6 billion ECU. Europe has never before known an operation on this scale, and it represents 66% of the international humanitarian effort.

The most tangible sign of this aid operation's success is that very few people in Bosnia have died as a result of a shortage of basic necessities, despite the violence of the conflict, the destruction of infrastructure and social services, and access difficulties. The humanitarian effort will certainly be continued over the next two years, alongside the setting up of a huge reconstruction plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina and the neighbouring republics.



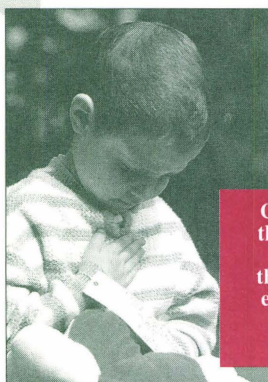
It is essential to recreate the fabric of the local economy and infrastructure, in order to stimulate the voluntary return of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons.



ECHO's global reach

CIS TREATMENT OF CHERNOBYL VICTIMS

The long-term effects of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster continue to claim victims among the populations of Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine. Children are the first to be affected. ECHO continues to support the projects of the International Federation of the Red Cross and various NGOs in the region. A decision to allocate an extra 2 million ECU has just been made. This will ensure continuous medical supervision of people exposed to the radiation, and also provide for specialist equipment for hospitals treating disorders linked to the radiation, particularly cancers.

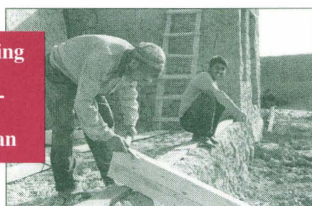


Children are the first to be affected by the long-term effects of the Chernobyl disaster

ECHO is supporting a programme for house reconstruction in the south of Tajikistan

TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN HELPING THE MOST VULNERABLE

ECHO has long supported the emergency programmes in this region, and is participating in a huge European Commission food aid programme covering the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Tajikistan is the poorest republic in the former Soviet Union: the great political instability there is hindering any reform process, which in turn is causing a collapse in people's living standards. Many are currently living below the poverty line. To complete the programmes already under way, ECHO granted an additional sum of around 3 million ECU at the beginning of the year. This will cover food aid and the distribution of basic medical products, as well as a small programme for house reconstruction in the south. For its part, DGVIII is funding a large-scale distribution of seeds to try to revive agriculture. The forecasts for this year are catastrophic, since the peasants have no money to purchase the seeds required. Although the situation in Kyrgyzstan is less serious, some vulnerable groups are suffering



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as a result of constraints imposed by the reforms. That is why ECHO is taking action (1.2 million ECU) in the medical and food areas, helping some clearly-identified groups such as young underprivileged mothers.

CAMBODIA HUMANITARIAN MINE CLEARANCE

ECHO has just given the go-ahead for the funding of two mine clearance operations in Cambodia. The first is in the region of Phnom Voar (Kampot province), a region that is particularly dangerous because it was for a long time the bastion of the Khmer Rouge guerillas. The second is in the province of Kompong Thom. These mines currently kill or maim 300 people a month, seriously handicapping the development of the regions affected - especially the revival of agriculture. ECHO views these projects as "humanitarian mine clearance"; not just because the mines claim many victims, but also because clearance is vital for this region's reintegration of those people displaced by a conflict that tore the country apart for so many years. The NGO Handicap International will coordinate these two projects worth 1.85 million ECU in total.

The Great Lakes Region

Still under great stress

Burundi

At the beginning of February, the Council of the European Union became very concerned about the situation in Burundi - which is gradually sinking into civil war - and appointed a "troika" mission (Spanish, Italian and Irish presidencies), accompanied by representatives of the Commission and Council, to meet Bujumbura government officials. ECHO took part in the mission to review the deteriorating humanitarian situation in this country. As a result of incessant incursions by Hutu militia from neighbouring countries, in addition to the internal violence, a large part of the population is completely isolated from any humanitarian aid, since the risks of organising aid are too high. Many humanitarian organisations have been forced to suspend their activities or have withdrawn to the capital of Bujumbura. ECHO currently supports seven organisations concentrating on medical aid.

Rwanda

Although Rwanda is now emerging from the emergency situation and embarking on its rehabilitation and reconstruction, there are still vulnerable groups whose fate depends entirely on humanitarian assistance. This applies especially to the numerous unaccompanied children, as well as the prisoners who are crammed into the country's overcrowded prisons and cells and whose situation is humanly unacceptable. ECHO continues to support eight NGOs active in this field within Rwanda.

Refugees

The two million refugees who continue to live in camps in neighbouring countries (Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda) are still the main destabilising factor in the region. All efforts to encourage them to return appear to fail. According to Hubert Onidi, Head of Unit at ECHO, "The refugees are still scared to go back. They remain traumatised by what they have been through and feel safer in the camps, in spite of the reduction in aid given to them." The situation is also very worrying because of

the apparent determination of the Zairean authorities to close some of the camps and to prohibit all UNHCR activities. What would happen to the refugees if they were forced to leave? ECHO is monitoring the situation on the ground very closely.



People are hesitating to return to Rwanda. Refugees feel safer in the camps.

Refugees and displaced people waiting for help at Tuzla airport



ECHOnews spoke to :

SELIM BESLAGIC

Mayor of Tuzla (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

The town of Tuzla took in over 250,000 refugees during the conflict, setting an example of harmonious cohabitation between different communities.

Your city is cited as an example of tolerance and harmonious cohabitation between the different ethnic communities. How do you explain this phenomenon ?

In Tuzla, we have always given priority to respect for human dignity over belonging to a nation or an ethnic community. In other regions, some advantages have been given respectively to Serbs, Croats or Muslims. These advantages have created tensions which have been amplified by the three national parties. Here in Tuzla, the importance of individual and common sense have prevailed: it is the only explanation I can give.

The town of Tuzla has welcomed a very large number of refugees. How has cohabitation between refugees and inhabitants developed? What is your opinion of the way in which aid has been organised by the international community ?

Over 250,000 refugees and displaced persons have passed through Tuzla, and we have permanently taken in 40,000 to 60,000. Today, 62,000 refugees are officially registered in the town. It must be admitted that cohabitation has not always been easy. The tension between inhabitants and refugees was very great in 1993, which we remember as a year of hunger. The main reason for this tension was that the

UNHCR only distributed supplies to the refugees and displaced persons. So the latter found themselves living in much better conditions than the local population. When we noticed there was an imbalance, we suggested the UNHCR should extend its distribution to the whole population. Which is what it actually did, but only six months later. Therefore, with the aid of the local authorities who had told us about this problem, the UNHCR succeeded in reducing this tension. This shows that a close collaboration between humanitarian organisations and local authorities must be maintained in future. It is key tool for overcoming crises more effectively.

The Dayton accord certainly does not bring to an end the very difficult humanitarian situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What, in your view, are the priorities to ensure the smooth transition between humanitarian aid and reconstruction ?

Since the start of the conflict, we have called for humanitarian aid to be given in the form of raw materials to allow industry to get going again and to give people back their independence. But we quickly realised that while the war was on, it was extremely difficult to get authorisation for anything other than strictly humanitarian aid. We fully realise that humanitarian aid has helped the inhabitants of Bos-

nia to survive over four years. But aid must now be redirected towards the supply of raw materials and spare parts, so we can restart our industry. It will not happen overnight, and in the meantime we will still be fully dependent on humanitarian aid.

In the coming months, in addition to the continuation of humanitarian programmes, the European Union will support the UNHCR's plan for repatriation and coordinated resettlement. What advice would you give to make sure this operation goes smoothly in Bosnia-Herzegovina ?

First of all, the agencies and NGOs should sit together with the different parties - the Federation, the Serb entity and the representatives of the local authorities - in order to define a repatriation and resettlement plan, which was not foreseen by the Dayton accord. One point here seems particularly important to me: priority must go to the people who are now displaced inside Bosnia. Later on we can start to take into consideration those living outside the country. If third countries insist on immediate repatriation of Bosnian refugees, our republic will be faced with an avalanche of people. This will mean opening new collective centres, because these refugees will have nowhere to go. A situation like this will certainly not help to stabilise Bosnia.

Interview by Mr Petanovic and B. Madsen, ECHO Bosnia

ECHO Information is now available on Internet at the following address : <http://www.ccc.lu/en/comm/echo/echo.html>

ECHO develops new methodology for evaluating humanitarian operations

What is the best way to measure the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian operations undertaken in the field under emergency situations? This question has been asked at ECHO since its creation in 1992, with a view to making humanitarian operations as effective as possible and to offer the European taxpayer a guarantee of the best use of resources allocated to the humanitarian effort. It was vital to develop an evaluation methodology adapted to the constraints of humanitarian operations, in order to fill the existing vacuum in this particular field. "Although there are methods for evaluating development projects, the practice of evaluation is not yet widespread in the field of emergency aid," says Jacqueline Coëffard, head of ECHO's Evaluation Unit. That is why ECHO will soon publish a technical manual including a methodology developed and used by the Office in its evaluation work.

Broadly speaking, how do ECHO evaluations take place ?

Evaluations may focus on specific operations implemented by the partners (NGOs or international organisations), on ECHO programmes (e.g.

Southern Caucasus-Northern Iraq), or on instruments used by ECHO such as the framework partnership contract or the Zagreb Task Force (ECTB). In most cases, the evaluation is done in real time, during the implementation of the programme or project in question. Evaluations are done by external independent consultants, so as to guarantee a rigorously objective approach. The evaluation report must be filed within very short periods (four

to five weeks). It must provide information that can be used directly, so immediate conclusions may be drawn regarding operations.

Although it is sometimes difficult to stand back from an emergency situation, evaluations enable certain aspects of the operations to be highlighted and taken into consideration for the future (see example in box).

SMALL CAUSES... BIG EFFECTS

Evaluations made during large-scale population movements, as in Rwanda and in its neighbouring countries, have demonstrated the need to think carefully about the type of food to be sent to the families of refugees and displaced persons. If the food provided needs a lot of cooking, the women will be forced to move around to find large quantities of fuel, in this case wood. This will lead to large-scale deforestation... Moreover, the women will be unable to look after their children while they are busy with this task. What may seem no more than a detail, when an emergency operation is being set up, will have major repercussions on the environment or social conditions. In this case, the evaluation's conclusions will allow lessons to be drawn, ensuring that future food dispatches only include food that can be cooked quickly.



The evaluation helped throw light on the impact of food aid on the environment in the Great Lakes region's camps